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Music

Post-Classical, Performing Some Very Good Works

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Classical music may be dying a slow death, but not if Joseph Horowitz has anything to say about it. Author of the essential "Classical Music in America," executive director of the Brooklyn Philharmonic and founder (with Angel Gil-Ordonez) of the Post Classical Ensemble, Horowitz has been dragging classical music out of its High Culture sickbed and giving it a series of healthy kicks.

And on Tuesday night the Ensemble did just that, in a bold concert at the Virginia Theological Seminary titled "Manuel de Falla and the Music of Faith."

The concert focused on a single movement of a single piece -- the 1926 Concerto for Keyboard -- which many Falla lovers tend to view with distrust or outright hate.

And it was brilliant. The program explored the deep Spanish roots of this remarkable work, which resonates with everything from Renaissance polyphony to 18th-century keyboard works to the toe-curling, 16th-century erotic-mystical poetry of John of the Cross -- all in a thoroughly modernist style.

Gil-Ordonez opened with three early choral works -- Thomas Aquinas's "Pange Lingua Gloriosi" and two sublime works by the 16th-century Tomas Luis de Victoria -- before pianist Pedro Carbone and the five members of the ensemble unleashed the Falla concerto. The piece is instantly compelling; it opens and closes with two colorful, biting and Stravinsky-flavored movements, each providing delight for the ear and sustenance for the brain.

But it was the slow and thoroughly magnificent middle movement that was the epicenter of the evening.

Radiant and austere, exalting and almost hymnlike, it shimmers with light, with vastness. As it unfolds, you think: This is what God listens to on a Sunday afternoon.

-- **Stephen Brookes**